Synopsis of the thesis titled

IDENTITY AND EXILE IN THE NOVELS OF SAMUEL SELVON

By

N. NAGABHUSHANAM

M.A., M.Phil.,

Under the Guidance of

Prof. V.C. SUDHEER (Retd)

M.A., PGDTE, Ph.D.,

Department of English

Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

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SYNOPSIS

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Samuel(Dickson) Selvon (1923-94) was a Trinidadian novelist of Indian and Scottish descent. His fiction, published between 1950 and the mid-1980's when he left Britain to live in Canada, was a milestone in the history and development of Caribbean and black British literature. Frequently described as the father of 'black writings' in Britain, a 'natural philosopher' and 'alchemist of language', Selvon was in one of a group of now-distinguished writers who arrived in Britain from the Caribbean during the 1950's. Selvon wrote ten novels set both in London and Trinidad.

The aim of the present thesis is to analyze the effects of the changes, differences and developments that emerged during and in the aftermath of colonialism in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the reflections of the Trinidadian literature in English which is classified under British Commonwealth Literature, specifically in Samuel Selvon's novels.

The West Indian Writers have found necessary to leave their home lands and base themselves in foreign lands in order to make a living from their work. The West Indian Literature ranges over subjects and subjects themes as wide as those of any other national literature, but in general many West Indian Writers share a special concern with questions of identity ethically and language that rise out of Caribbean historical experience.

The West Indian fiction portrays that mood of the distressed and the despaired. However what disturbs the West Indian novelists most is the

afflicted psyche of their people. They depict the fear, agony, humanization and consequent psychological complexes and conflicts experienced by their people during and after the colonial era. Psychological problems like inferiority complex, rootlessness, alienation and exile, search for identity and cultural traditions, like creolization have the dominant themes in their literature. The important thing is that colonialism which has shaken the world violently about two centuries and left an indelible impact under the facets of human life. In fact native social structures and natural lives have been destroyed and family unions have been shattered, cultural, traditional and orthodox values have been dislocated and individual psyche has been affected. Hence Samuel Selvon wrote his novels for his Caribbean identity and his personal identity in other places. There are seven chapters in the thesis.

Chapter – I Introduction, presenting the theoretical background of the thesis, contains a brief historical account of Trinidad's history based on historical documents and official sources along with providing theoretical information concerning the issue. In this chapter, the concepts of colonialism and post-colonialism of different theoreticians and the definitions and explanations of terms such as colonialism, post-colonialism, colonial discourses, Identity and Exile, hybridity, creolisation, that belong to post-colonial processes have been examined.

Chapter – II Quest for Manhood and Self-awareness for Identity (*A Brighter Sun and Turn Again Tiger*) deals with most important use of Trinidadian dialect for identity and the main character's quest for what has become the most compelling issue in the West Indian Literature: Identity, Self

awareness, self contempt and still showing the psychic scars of slavery and the equally of dehumanizing indenture system. Selvon drew his portrait of Tiger from his acquaintance with an old Indian man of the same name who symbolized for him the young peasant who starts off by gradually discovering about man's life. Creole identity and multi-racial culture are highlighted.

Chapter—III Towards Freedom and Traditional Sentiments of peasantry (*The Plains of Caroni* and *Those Who Eat Cascadura*) deals with the rise of national movements and its themes, creation of myths of past , the use of local scenery and Indo-Trinidadian peasantry and inter-racial relations and creolisation. The relationship between the English owner and multi-racial workers is a harmonious one. Local myth and exile are also dealt with in this chapter.

Chapter IV Un-balanced Conditions of the Middle Class (*An Island is a World* and *I Hear Thunder*) deals with the group of people in contemporary society. Common measures between cultures, social class between the nobility and the peasantry of Europe are examined.

Chapter – V Exile Experiences in Britain (*Lonely Londoners* (1956) and *A Housing Lark (1965*) deals with the lives of the West Indian emigrants in London. Moses receives new emigrants and provides shelters for them. Their joys and sorrows make up the novel. Selvon gave *The Lonely Londoners* a distinctive voice and identity and radical mixture of disciplines to investigate a mosaic of cultural components, in a juxtaposition of multiple overlapping identities and the formation of the group of West Indian men and women and

the restoration of some measure of dignity, identity of pride through the acquiring of house and spouse.

Chapter-VI Moses' Emergence of writing for Cultural Identity' (*Moses Ascending* and *Moses Migrating*) deals with Moses' writing for his memoir and also for his Creole identity and his personal identification. Their native in habitants were exterminated by European colonies and they damaged indigenous culture and began plantation societies. History of Caribbean has been marked as a steady and random accumulation of cultural and ethnic elements which contributed to produce challenging artistic responses to colonialism, imperialism and to the imposition of the English language and of the western cultural legacy. It also deals with the re-exile of Moses from London to Trinidad to move and mingle with his native inhabitants though he is a landlord.

Chapter – VII Conclusion discusses the essence of all the elements in the previous chapters and the critical analysis of Samuel Selvon. The Creole culture and English Language were blended in his narration and description. He regards himself as a creolized West Indian. But he has a strong sense of displacement and humour and this sometimes emerges as a subtle theme in his fiction.

As a result of the analysis carried out under the light of the postcolonial theories and processes identified by various scholars it has been concluded that the racial composition of Trinidad is reflective of the process of colonization and the characters depicted in the novels of Samuel Selvon exhibit hybridized and creolized characteristics.